



Orthodox Doctrine Mixed With Fooliness

Accordingly, if Celsus were to ask us how we think we know God, and how we shall be saved by Him, we would answer that the Word of God, which entered into those who seek Him, or who accept Him when He appears, is able to make known and to reveal the Father, who was not seen (by any one) before the appearance of the Word. And who else is able to save and conduct the soul of man to the God of all things, save God the Word, who, "being in the beginning with God," became flesh for the sake of those who had cleaved to the flesh, and had become as flesh, that He might be received by those who could not behold Him, inasmuch as He was the Word, and was with God, and was God?

And discoursing in human form, and announcing Himself as flesh, He calls to Himself those who are flesh, that He may in the first place cause them to be transformed according to the Word that was made flesh, and afterwards may lead them upwards to behold Him as He was before He became flesh; so that they, receiving the benefit, and ascending from their great introduction to Him, which was according to the flesh, say, "Even if we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we Him no more." Therefore He became flesh, and having become flesh, "He tabernacled among us," not dwelling without us; and after tabernacling and dwelling *within* us, He did not continue in the form in which He first presented Himself, but caused us to ascend to the lofty mountain of His word, and showed us His own glorious form, and the splendour of His garments; and not His own form alone, but that also of the spiritual law, which is Moses, seen in glory along with Jesus.

He showed to us, moreover, all prophecy, which did not perish even after His incarnation, but was received up into heaven, and whose symbol was Elijah. And he who beheld these things could say, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and

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truth." Celsus, then, has exhibited considerable ignorance in the imaginary answer to his question which he puts into our mouth, "How we think we can know God? and how we know we shall be saved by Him?" for our answer is what we have just stated.

Celsus, however, asserts that the answer which we give is based upon a probable conjecture, admitting that he describes our answer in the following terms: "Since God is great and difficult to see, He put His own Spirit into a body that resembled ours, and sent it down to us, that we might be enabled to hear Him and become acquainted with Him." But the God and Father of all things is not the only being that is great in our judgment; for He has imparted (a share) of Himself and His greatness to His Only-begotten and First-born of every creature, in order that He, being the image of the invisible God, might preserve, even in His greatness, the image of the Father.

For it was not possible that there could exist a well-proportioned, so to speak, and beautiful image of the invisible God, which did not at the same time preserve the image of His greatness. God, moreover, is in our judgment invisible, because He is not a body, while He can be seen by those who see with the heart, that is, the understanding; not indeed with any kind of heart, but with one which is pure. For it is inconsistent with the fitness of things that a polluted heart should look upon God; for that must be itself pure which would worthily behold that which is pure.

Origen, "Against Celsus," Book vi, Chaps. lxxviii-lxix, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1885), Vol. 4, pp. 604-605.

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A Note From the Editor

Although speech is not the only form of communication available to us as humans, it is still the primary means by which we communicate with others. Of course, when people speak different languages, it becomes necessary to communicate in other ways. If you have ever been to a foreign country where you didn't know the language of the people and they didn't know yours, you know that verbal communication is an exercise in futility. Only external forms of communication work under those circumstances—hand gesturing, drawing a picture, performing a pantomime, anything that creates an "image" which communicates your desire.

Since a picture is said to be worth a thousand words, creating an "image" that others can "see" with their mind's "eye" is often an effective way to convey a message. So it should not surprise True Believers to learn that one of the primary ways God has chosen to communicate Truth to His People is through parabolic imagery and parabolic pantomimes. He knows that images which can be seen in the mind's eye are an effective way to communicate information; so effective, in fact, that True Believers are able to see and understand elements of the Truth that cannot be explained to them verbally. But that doesn't mean True Believers don't need to hear an oral Teaching that explains the meaning and significance of what they see. The Truth is, God has used parabolic imagery in conjunction with oral Teaching to help His People understand the Truth.

As logic dictates, the only way a Teacher can verbally communicate the meaning and significance of the parabolic imagery of the Scriptures is if the Teacher has a comprehensive understanding of how God used this imagery in the first place. That means the only way you, if you are a True Believer, are going to learn the Truth you need to hear is by putting yourself under the tutelage of a Teacher who understands the Truth. Over the years, I have made no bones about the fact that your chances of finding a legitimate Teacher in the Church who can explain the things you need to know are slim to nonexistent. At the same time, I have unabashedly stated that *The Voice of Elijah*® can present these things to you because The Teaching we offer comes from a legitimate Teacher called by God. How do I know this person is a legitimate Teacher? Because The Teaching he teaches validates him as a true Teacher, just as Jesus said it would (John 7:16–18).

If you don't know whether or not to believe all of this, let me explain a bit more about what is going on. In the mercy of God, True Believers are being given one last chance prior to Christ's Second Advent to hear and believe the same Truth—The Apostolic Teaching—that He taught at the time of His First Advent. Whether or not you are counted among "The Many" who gain insight and understanding (Dan. 12:10)

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from the Word you hear taught in these Last Days will depend on several things. First, it depends on whether you are a born-again Believer. Second, it will depend on whether you have a genuine interest in knowing the Truth.

Those who meet these criteria already know something is terribly wrong in the Church today, even if they don't know what it is. On the other hand, those who don't meet these criteria have no idea that anything at all is wrong with the Church and probably think God is pleased with what He sees. If you are part of this latter group, I will tell you bluntly that you are living under a major delusion. And I will further tell you that until you are willing to be honest and take a good, hard look at the Truth, God will let you continue living under this delusion. That may sound preposterous, but it's true. After all, it's not without good reason that the Apostle Paul talks about the "deluding influence" God intends to let Satan foist upon those who have no love of the Truth here at the End of the Age (2 Thess. 2:8–12).

Are You Really Seeking Truth?

Before moving on to complete the final segment of the series I started more than two years ago, I want to do something I should have been doing with greater regularity over the past several years. I want to encourage those of you who are seeking the Truth and who firmly believe you have found it in *The Voice of Elijah*[®] newsletter to consider moving up to the next level of instruction. That is, I want to encourage you to become a Monthly Contributor. If you have ever looked at the Order Form included with each issue, you have undoubtedly seen information about becoming a Monthly Contributor. However, since that information is limited, I'll explain more about this opportunity.

A Monthly Contributor is a person who contributes a minimum of \$25 per month to our ministry because of his or her belief in the work of *The Voice of Elijah*[®]. In return for this nominal monthly contribution, Monthly Contributors qualify to receive the

following benefits during the time they remain Contributors:

- ▲ *An ongoing subscription to **The Voice of Elijah**[®] newsletter, which consists of four issues annually.*
- ▲ *An ongoing subscription to **The Voice of Elijah**[®] Update, a twelve- to sixteen-page publication that is issued eight times a year, during those months when the newsletter is not published. **The Update** was originally intended to "update" Contributors on current events related to the End Time. In recent years, it has evolved into a more broad-ranged publication with greater focus on the writings of the Early Church prior to A.D. 200.*
- ▲ *A complimentary copy of **The Advent of Christ and AntiChrist**, a 255-page book provided exclusively to Monthly Contributors by The Elijah Project. This is a must-read for those who seek to know what the Early Church understood concerning the coming Antichrist and the Time of the End. It contains a much greater volume of information than its condensed version, **The AntiChrist**.*
- ▲ *All new publications made available to **The Voice of Elijah**[®] by The Elijah Project during the time you remain a Monthly Contributor.*

Let me explain why the contributions of Monthly Contributors are crucial to the ministry of *The Voice of Elijah*[®]. As many of you know, we claim that God is restoring the Truth of The Apostolic Teaching through our ministry. As we have stated repeatedly, The Apostolic Teaching is a specific body of knowledge consisting of intricate parabolic imagery and Hebrew idioms that True Believers in the Early Church understood. Through knowledge of and belief in The Teaching, early Christians were united in "one body," "one Spirit," and "one faith" (Eph. 4:4–6). This oneness was possible because each member of the Body of Christ—that is, every True Believer in the Church—believed exactly the same body of knowledge.

It doesn't take a genius to see that the Church today does not fit this mold. The reason it doesn't is simple: The Church failed to preserve and hand down The Teaching it received from the Apostles. By A.D. 200, false teachers had totally distorted the Truth of The Apostolic Teaching, just as the Apostles knew they would (Acts 20:29-30; 2 Pet. 2; 1 John 4:1). The lack of unity and the diversity of opinion in Protestant Christianity today provides more than ample evidence to any rational person that things are not what they should be. Fortunately, God is now in the process of changing this sorry situation before the End, just as He said He would.

For the sake of those who have "eyes to see" and "ears to hear," God, in His mercy, is restoring "The Way" back to Himself. That is, He is restoring The Apostolic Teaching that was once known, understood, and believed by the Early Church. He is doing this so that True Believers in our own day have the opportunity to prepare for the trying times that lie ahead and so that Israel might once again "present to the Lord offerings in righteousness ... as in the days of old and as in former years" (Mal. 3:3-4). (I trust you know who "Israel" is by now. If you aren't sure, you would be wise to order a copy of *Not All Israel Is Israel*.)

Although most in the Church today will refuse to believe any of this, there are many—"The Many"—who will believe the Truth if they are only given the chance to hear it. That's why *The Voice of Elijah*® exists: to provide True Believers with the Truth they need to hear. But we can't do that if those who have already heard and believed the Truth are not doing their part to help us reach those who don't even know we exist. That's why we need your help. We at *The Voice of Elijah*® cannot accomplish the work set before us without financial support. That doesn't make us unique; it makes us just like every other ministry that claims to be doing God's work. The question you must answer is whether you believe we are doing God's work. If you do, I know you'll be willing to support this ministry.

The objective of our ministry is to reach "The Many" who are still searching for the Truth they know they lack. As a Monthly Contributor, you will be helping us find these individuals so that they

might have opportunity to hear the Truth you have heard. But in the process of helping others, you will also be helping yourself through the additional insight gained from *The Voice of Elijah*® *Update*, *The Advent of Christ and AntiChrist*, and other publications The Elijah Project will be releasing in the future. So if you believe in the work of *The Voice of Elijah*®, I encourage you to join with others and become a Monthly Contributor.

Finishing What I Started

Now I want to complete the last in the series of articles I have been writing on how to be a more astute student of the Bible. In the next issue, I will summarize everything by reviewing what I have covered over the past 2½ years.

As I told you when I started this series, one of the most important things I ever learned about studying the Bible (after many years of attending Bible studies) is that we all tend to overlook important facts because of our proclivity to think we already know what the Bible says. Because of our assumptions, which are generally based on the traditions we have heard taught over the years, we tend to read the Bible superficially rather than scrutinizing it carefully with an open and inquisitive mind.

Although most in the Church will deny it, there is a distinct tendency to overlook, explain away, or mentally discard any passage of Scripture that contradicts the mainstream beliefs held by the majority in the Church. For instance, I have yet to hear, in the twenty-four years I have been a Christian, anyone in the Church—pastor, elder, Sunday School teacher, layman, or whoever—offer an honest appraisal of Psalm 5:5 and 11:5, which state in unambiguous terms that God hates (and the Hebrew term really means "hates") the Wicked. The reason I haven't heard one is simple: These verses totally contradict the blatant lie the Church adopted nearly a hundred years ago that says God has unconditional love for all men.

Since no one in the Church can adequately refute what these verses plainly state, they simply choose to ignore them or pretend they don't exist. But try as they might, Pretenders are not going to be

able to silence the Truth of these verses. The fact is, they have already testified before the Supreme Judge to the fact that few in the Church today have a genuine interest in the Truth. Before all is said and done, the Scriptures are going to take the witness stand and testify against all who claim to know and love the Truth, yet actually despise and reject it.

The Scriptures provide the only tangible means by which you can validate the things you hear taught (Acts 17:11). However, the Scriptures won't validate the Truth if you aren't actually looking for it. That's because you can easily twist and pervert the Scriptures to make them say whatever you want them to say. Therefore, your approach to the Scriptures will ultimately depend on whether you have been born again and whether you have a sincere desire to know the Truth and nothing but the Truth. Sadly, those two criteria are missing in the majority of the people who claim to be Christians today. The Apostle Paul knew this would be the case when he said this about future "Christians" in the Church:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but {wanting} to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

(2 Timothy 4:3-4)

This verse clearly and forthrightly states things as they are in the Church today. Although most "Christians" who roost in the pews of their church every Sunday morning will never admit that what Paul wrote applies to them, it does. Any person with even a tad of honesty can see that most people in the Church today only want to hear what makes them feel good. And if that means moving from this church to that church to another church to hear it, they will, and they do. Needless to say, the fickle nature of today's "Christians" has not gone unnoticed by pastors. Most pastors have become quite proficient in the fine art of "ear-tickling" because they don't want to preside over a dwindling congregation. They know it's easier to fill pews (and keep

them full) if they go easy on people and tell them what they want to hear.

The Voice of Elijah® doesn't play this game, which is partly the reason we haven't had a very big favorable response—yet. Since Pretenders don't want to hear the Truth, they leave us almost immediately. True Believers, on the other hand, tend to stick around and listen to what we have to say because the Spirit residing within them (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13) is constantly seeking Truth and identifies with what we teach. Yet the only way True Believers can ultimately verify the truthfulness of The Teaching presented in *The Voice of Elijah*® is through the Holy Scriptures.

Since the Scriptures are crucial for confirming and validating the Truth, it is imperative that True Believers become more adept at reading the Bible with attention to detail. My objective over the past 2½ years has been to help you, in some small way, succeed in this endeavor. Whether I have succeeded or failed is for you to decide. At the very least, I hope you have gained a greater appreciation for why it's important to pay close attention to what the Bible says.

Conclusions or Summaries

The Bible study technique I have advocated in this series involves two basic activities: (1) looking for specific types of information (who, what, why, how, etc.) as you read the Scriptures and (2) looking for key words and phrases that point to this specific information. Let's quickly review the things I told you to look for when reading the Bible. I said you should look for:

- ▲ *Stated reasons why something is true.*
- ▲ *How something is accomplished.*
- ▲ *Conditions that must be met.*
- ▲ *Who is being spoken to or spoken about.*
- ▲ *Contrasts and comparisons between two things.*
- ▲ *Exceptions or restrictions to what has been said.*
- ▲ *Repeated words and phrases.*
- ▲ *Cause and effect.*
- ▲ *Conclusions or summaries.*

As I have said before, these are just some of the things a good student of the Bible should watch for when reading the Scriptures. I selected these few items because they provide basic information that can help you get more out of your reading and because these things are relatively easy to find in the Scriptures. Which is another reason I like this list. There are numerous key words and phrases associated with these items that can make them easy to spot.

For instance, *if* is a word that generally conveys the fact that a condition is being stipulated. Similarly, the word *like* generally indicates that a comparison is being made. Likewise, *by* and *through* often tell us how something is accomplished. As you can see, each of these key words are ordinary words that are capable of carrying different meanings depending on how they are used. That is why it's imperative that you pay close attention to the context in which all key words are used, including those we are going to look at now.

The key terms associated with the last item on the list—conclusions or summaries—are *therefore* and *so then*. Since *therefore* is used over a thousand times in the Bible, it is important to make a distinction in how the term is used. Generally, *therefore* is used in the Scriptures in one of two ways: (1) to denote cause and effect or (2) to denote a summation or concluding statement. In "A Note From the Editor" in the July 1998 issue of *The Voice of Elijah*®, I said *therefore* is seldom used in the Scriptures to denote cause and effect. That was a horrible blunder on my part. I'm not sure if I was suffering from paralysis of the brain or if I simply failed to do adequate research at the time, but whatever happened, my comments were wrong. *Therefore* is frequently used in the Scriptures to denote cause and effect. Since I didn't discuss this in the last issue (when I should have), I will do so in my summary in the next issue.

Putting that aside for now, let's look at *therefore* as it relates to conclusions or summaries. The Apostolic letters—the epistles—in the New Testament seem to utilize *therefore* most often to denote conclusions or summaries. This makes sense since the epistles contain many logical arguments

that naturally draw logical conclusions. That's why *therefore* and *so then* are often used at the beginning of a sentence. Concluding or summary statements generally take you to the heart of what the author was previously talking about. In other words, they tell you the basic point the author was making. This is particularly helpful if the author's thoughts leading up to his concluding statement or summation are difficult to follow. Here's an example:

*For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. **Therefore** let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*
(1 Corinthians 10:1–12)

Did you catch the basic point Paul is making here? First, he cites the fact that all of Israel was exposed to The Teaching of Moses, which he refers to as spiritual "food" and "drink." Then he cites numerous examples of Israel's failure to abide in The Teaching they had received from Moses and says the examples of Israel's failures "were written for our instruction." And finally he sums up his thoughts by saying, "**Therefore** let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." His main point is that it's not enough to be exposed to The Teaching as Israel was. If we don't believe The Teaching or if

we fail to preserve it and abide in it, we won't stand righteous before God in the End. Our ability to discern Paul's main point in verses 1–11 is made easier by his summation in verse 12. And the key word that lets us know he is making a summation is *therefore*. Now here is an example where Paul uses the phrase *so then* to sum up his thoughts:

*Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for {it will not come} unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains {will do so} until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; {that is,} the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they may all be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. **So then**, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word {of mouth} or by letter from us.*

(2 Thessalonians 2:1–15)

Do you see Paul's main thrust in this discourse? He is concerned from beginning to end with the fact that false teachers had duped the Thessalonian Believers into believing lies related to "the day of the Lord." First, he voices this concern in verses 1 and 2; then he moves on in verses 3–12 to talk about things related to the Day of the Lord that he had previously taught them in person (v. 5). Finally, he concludes in verse 15 with his main point: Stand firm in your faith and continue to hold to the traditions—The Teaching—that you were taught.

Although the information contained in this passage provides us with important insight into the sequence of events related to the End, it should be noted that Paul's primary intent in writing what he did was to calm the Thessalonians' fears (which were rooted in lies) and to remind them to hold firmly to the Truth he had previously taught them. Our ability to see Paul's overall emphasis in this passage is due largely to the use of *so then*, which lets us know he is summing up his previous thoughts.

I will conclude with some Scripture references you can look up on your own. Due to space limitations, I can't write these passages out for you, but that's probably good because you should spend some time studying the context surrounding these references on your own. That way you can decide for yourself which verses are encapsulated in the concluding or summary statement. As we saw in the examples above, it's not uncommon for several verses of Scripture to be tied to a concluding or summary statement, but that's not always the case. So pay close attention to the context surrounding the references you look up, and see what you can learn. Here are the references: Romans 5:1, 18; 6:4, 12, 21; 7:3, 4, 12, 13, 25; 8:1, 12; 9:16, 18; 12:1; 13:2, 10, 12; 14:8, 12, 13, 16, 19; 15:17.

Allen Fries

I' Tell You What: Odds Are, You'll Never Beat God at His Shell Game

In "Questions & Answers" in the January 1998 issue of *The Voice of Elijah*[®], I was asked to explain what Jesus was *talking about* in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14–30), which I did. Then in "Questions & Answers" in the April 1998 issue, I was asked to explain the *meaning* of the Parable of the Sower. I did that as well. However, with that issue, I began a series of articles whose purpose is to explain the *meaning* of all of Jesus' parables rather than just a few. You see, the parables of Jesus do not stand alone as isolated units. Each one of them is related in some way to an ongoing discourse in which Jesus was privately explaining *The Teaching* to His disciples.

Don't Speak Too Plainly to Fools

In this article, I want to show you a few parables in which Jesus cryptically referred to Himself as the Son of God. If you find it a stretch to believe that He would do such a thing, you obviously haven't paid much attention to what happened when He stated that fact openly. John tells us this:

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall

*snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given {them} to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch {them} out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out {to be} God." Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.
(John 10:22–39)*

Any unbiased reader with an average IQ should be able to discern that Jesus readily admitted He had said, "I am the Son of God." And it is obvious that the Jews would have stoned Him for that had He not known what they had in mind and eluded them. The problem He faced in that regard is the same problem that everyone who understands *The Teaching* faces when they state what they know in the hearing of fools: They lay their lives on the line. Ignorant people refuse to even consider the possibility that they don't know the Truth. Instead, they become enraged. That is because they are not only blind to the Truth, they are also extremely contentious.

Having said that, now let me lay my life on the line by stating the Truth of *The Teaching* plainly and do what I can to provoke all the idiots among us who have no interest in hearing anything that contradicts the lies they now believe. The Truth is, the "Son of God" that Jesus claimed to be is nothing more than a *parabolic image* that God has used to describe a far greater spiritual reality. It is linked directly to a *parabolic image* in which God Himself has appointed Jesus Christ as King (another *parabolic image*) over all Creation. Yet everybody believes that Jesus Christ was *literally* the Son of God because they are ignorant of the *parabolic imagery*.

The Truth is, Jesus was *literally* the *parabolic* Son of God *after* His Baptism and *before* He died on the cross. Then *after* His Resurrection, He *became* the *literal* reality He had represented as the *parabolic* Son of God *before* He died. But you can hardly be expected to understand that because God has hidden the Truth of *The Teaching of Moses* in the Hebrew Scriptures and ignorant folks down through the centuries have assumed things that are not so. Therefore, I will present a few points of logic for you to consider. Perhaps then you will see that you should look at the Son of God concept a bit differently.

The first thing we need to establish is what we have already established: Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God. If you know your Bible, you already know that Jesus was speaking *parabolically* when He said that because He *always* spoke in parables. But then again, you may not have understood that Jesus *always* spoke in parables, so let me quote what Mark says:

And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it; and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.
(Mark 4:33–34)

Now I realize that some idiot is most likely going to claim that Mark is referring to what Jesus said on just that one occasion. But what does he know? He no doubt assumes that all the *parabolic statements* of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John are *literal* descriptions of some loony fact or other. The Truth is, the only people to whom Jesus provided a *literal* explanation of anything in *The Teaching* were His disciples. Until you are willing to admit that simple fact, you will *never* understand what Jesus said.

Another fact we need to keep in mind is that according to the authors of the New Testament, God has only one "begotten" Son. That would seem to be a self-evident fact to all but the most contentious, that is, to all those who enjoy performing the most amazing mental gymnastics on the head of a pin.

I'm sorry; I apologize. That "head of a pin" remark was rude. Nevertheless, what I said was right on the mark. I was alluding to the theological debate stupid folks had a few centuries back. They disagreed over how many angels could occupy the head of a pin. I find it amusing that some people are capable of arguing over the most inane (*unknowable*) things. If you think scholars aren't debating equally ridiculous subjects today, you obviously don't get out much.

Any belief concerning the heretofore or hereafter that does not ultimately rely on the interpretation of at least some small scrap of epigraphic evidence is unavoidably founded on nothing more than theory. While theory works just fine as long as it accurately describes some *observable* and *verifiable* phenomenon, nobody but the proverbial fool would stupidly "build a house" on unadulterated theory. Yet lots of religious folks today are doing that very thing.

The Apostle John says this about Jesus as the "only begotten" Son of God:

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained {Him.}
(John 1:14–18)

That's what John says. But this is what he tells us Jesus said:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged

already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

(John 3:16–18)

In another place, John tells us this:

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

(1 John 4:9)

Now that we have entered the words of both the Apostle John and Jesus Christ into evidence as confirmation of the fact that the Apostles believed God has only one "begotten" Son, let's take a good look at what God Himself said on another occasion:

And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My first-born. So I said to you, 'Let My son go, that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your first-born.'"

(Exodus 4:21–23)

Let's think about this for a bit. We already know that, according to the fine folks who gave us the New Testament, God has but one "begotten" Son and that Son is Jesus Christ. Yet now we find that, according to the Old Testament, God had already told Moses some fourteen or fifteen centuries earlier that Israel was His *firstborn* Son. So which One of those two actually is the Son of God? Is it Jesus Christ, the "only begotten?" Or is it Israel, the *firstborn*? Or maybe God has two Sons: Israel His *firstborn* and Jesus Christ His "only begotten."

Oh, by the way, I know some lamebrain is going to claim that God was only speaking *figuratively* when He said Israel was His *firstborn* Son. That's the typical response one can expect from an addlebrain, but it misses the point entirely. God was not speaking *figuratively* when He said Israel was His *firstborn* Son; He was speaking *parabolically*, as He always did to and through His Prophets. The problem is that whereas God spoke *parabolically*, telling Moses that Israel was His *firstborn* Son, the Apostles (also speaking *parabolically*) make that same claim concerning Jesus Christ. Paul says this:

*For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for {our} adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for {us} with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to {the will of} God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to {His} purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined {to become} conformed to the image of His Son, **that He might be the first-born among many brethren**; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

(Romans 8:19–30)

You may already have perspicaciously observed that in that passage, Paul is using a *parabolic image* not unlike the one the Prophets use in which the world is a *harlot* who endures the pain of childbirth to engender children for God. Yet the important thing to notice in that regard is that toward the end of the passage, the Apostle refers to Jesus Christ as "the first-born among many brethren." The *parabolic image* he has in mind is clearly one in which God has many sons and Jesus Christ is His "first-born among many brethren." So where does that leave Israel?

Perhaps I should emphasize the fact that when Paul says that about Christ, he is speaking *parabolically* in exactly the same way that God was speaking *parabolically* when He said Israel was His *firstborn* Son. I realize that isn't all that obvious to anyone who does not understand what the Prophets have stated *parabolically* concerning God's *Firstborn* Son, Jesus Christ. However,

even an abject idiot should be able to see that Paul is speaking *parabolically* when he depicts the world as a woman experiencing labor pains.

Paul is *talking about* the *parabolic* birth of God's Children—a *literal* event that he calls "the revealing of the sons of God." So why would anyone but an absolute dolt insist that he must be speaking *literally* concerning Jesus Christ as the *Firstborn* Son of God? What does the fool think Paul has done? Did he make a mental switch to Christ as the *literal Firstborn* after speaking *parabolically* concerning the world as a pregnant woman who will *parabolically* bear all the rest of God's Children? Or maybe he made a quick *literal-to-parabolic* shift between the words "first-born" and "among many brethren." Don't be dense. He is speaking *parabolically* the entire time, and if you are not completely blind and argumentative, you are able to see that.

By the way, I have been doing my dead-level best for several years now to draw out the contention of fools and provoke them into rejecting what I teach. If I am ever successful in your case, you will stop reading what I write. And the reason for that will be because you have not understood and *believed* the Truth so as to overlook my intentionally contentious statements.

If you check the context in which the above passage occurs, you will find that before Paul *talks about* the world as a woman *parabolically* giving birth to the Children of God, he begins by *talking about* Believers' *adoption* as sons of God. So let me ask a quick question or two of any fool who wants to blindly argue that Paul is not speaking *parabolically* when he *talks about* Believers as the Children of God. How can Believers be both born *and* adopted as Children of God? And how about this one: Don't the Scriptures tell us Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God? Sure they do! So if He is a lamb, how can He also be the *Firstborn* Son of God? Unless I am mistaken, Mr. Deep-thinker, a lamb is not a member of God's race. Well, neither is a human being, Mr. Shallow-mind. Now think about how that relates to the issue of the adoption and birth of God's Children. But don't strain yourself unduly.

While Believers' *parabolic* adoption as the Children of God might seem to contradict the notion of the world as a woman who *parabolically* gives birth to the Children of God, both are nothing more than *parabolic images*. And if you desire to understand the Truth, you must resign yourself to the fact that the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching* often seems to contradict itself. That is

because it is just *parabolic imagery*. A *parabolic image* does not tell you what something IS; it merely tells you what something IS LIKE. Therefore, it is impossible for one *parabolic image* to contradict another since any number of *parabolic images*—even seemingly contradictory *parabolic images*—can be used to describe the same thing. Each image explains how that one thing IS LIKE something else. For example, in *The Teaching*, Jesus Christ is *parabolically* depicted as the Lamb of God, "The House" of Israel, the Son of David, and the *firstborn* Son of God. But those and all the other *parabolic images* of *The Teaching* do nothing more than tell us how some far greater reality IS LIKE this visible reality.

For the record, I should tell you that *parabolically* speaking, Jesus Christ *became* the *Firstborn* Son of God in exactly the same way that everybody else *becomes* a Child of God—by *adoption*. But in His case, adoption was necessary only because (*parabolically* speaking again) He was born the Son of David, not the Son of God. I have already *talked about* that elsewhere and told you how that *parabolic imagery* is related to the Hebrew idiom "raise up a seed." (See "Pretenders Patently Prefer Satan's Perversion," *The Voice of Elijah*® *Update*, February 1997 and "What Fool Cut Down the Tree of Life and Made Himself a Casket?" *The Voice of Elijah*® *Update*, September 1997.) That is, in engendering Christ through the agency of His Holy Spirit, God "gave a *Seed*" to David. So that *Seed* was not His *Seed*; that is, Jesus Christ was not God's Son by birth, He was David's. According to the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*, Christ *became* God's Son when He was "given" as a "*Seed*," that is, when He was "given" as a sacrifice, to God. That is all nothing more than *parabolic imagery*. But without it, you can't even begin to understand what Jesus *meant* by what He said in John 3:16.

The *parabolic imagery* related to Christ's birth as the Son of David in no way negates His supernatural origin or divine nature. It is nothing more than *parabolic imagery* that explains the *meaning* and *significance* of His First Advent in the same way that the *firstborn* Son of God is *parabolic imagery* that explains the *meaning* and *significance* of His Second Advent. That is, the "Son of David" image tells us what the birth of Jesus Christ in the image and likeness of man was LIKE in the same way that the "*firstborn* Son of God" image tells us what His Resurrection in the image and likeness of God was LIKE. But just to counter the drivel of fools who are enthralled by Satan's *literal interpretation* goofiness, I

must also tell you that Moses and the Prophets used both sets of *parabolic images* to explain the *meaning* and *significance* of *literal* events.

Hey, Ho! What Do You Know?

Now let's put off for the moment the question of whether Jesus Christ or Israel is God's *firstborn* Son. The first thing we need to consider is the fact that *parabolically* speaking, God has more than one Son. Paul has just told us that. But he doesn't tell us how the "first-born among many brethren" image that he uses in the passage above fits in with the *parabolic image* of the "only begotten Son" that the Apostle John likes so much. Although both of those *parabolic images* describe some reality other than *literal* birth as the Children of God, they, nevertheless, speak directly concerning where Jesus Christ stands in relation to God's other *parabolic* Children.

It should be obvious that the phrase "only begotten Son of God" must be referring to one of two things. If you stop to consider how Jesus Christ could be that and yet still be "the first-born among many brethren," the "begotten" part could be referring to the fact that He is the only biological (if that is the proper term) Son that God the Father "begat." The rest of us had some other biological father.

It could, however, just as easily refer to the fact that He is "The One" as opposed to "The Many." That is, He is the only resurrected—*eternally* "begotten"—Son of God. Everyone else is resurrected "in Him." The Truth is, it can *parabolically* refer to either one or both of those two events, and context alone will determine whether the emphasis is on one or both in any given instance. But since that issue is not entirely pertinent to our discussion here, we can leave the matter as it stands.

Now that we have at least partially resolved the "only begotten Son of God" issue, let's get back to the *parabolic image* by which both Jesus Christ and Israel are *parabolically* depicted as the *firstborn* Son of God. If you check a concordance of the Bible, you will find that *parabolic image* linked directly to the *literal* Resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is, the Apostles tell us Jesus Christ, the Son of David, *became* the *Firstborn* Son of God when He arose from the dead.

You may not have understood that resurrection is what Paul *meant* when he said "glorified" in Romans 8:30, but that does not change the fact that the context

tells us he was *parabolically* depicting the Resurrection of the Righteous as the birth of the Children of God. I have no intention of explaining how that *literal* event fits in with the various notions that folks have concerning the new birth. But I will tell you the beliefs concerning that life-transforming *experience* that have been *handed down* by the Protestant Church are valid insofar as they agree with what Charles Finney, the great Evangelist, had to say about the conversion *experience*. Unfortunately, Christian beliefs regarding the new birth have changed quite a bit since his time. Which is to say, I do not agree with everything the Church teaches today concerning the new birth because most of the people currently preaching that doctrine have never had the benefit of the *experience*. Consequently, they don't have the slightest inkling of what they are *talking about*.

For those of you who prefer that I do all the heavy lifting, here is what Paul said about Jesus Christ as the *Firstborn* Son of God on another occasion:

And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, {both} in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.
(Colossians 1:15–18)

You can't fully comprehend *what* Paul has said in that passage until you understand *why* he said it. That involves a detailed understanding of *all* the *parabolic imagery* he uses, including the one in which Jesus Christ is Israel, the *Firstborn* Son of God. But the fundamental *parabolic image* he has in mind is directly related to what he calls "the image of the invisible God." I can hardly explain that *parabolic image* in these few pages since it has taken me the better part of the past three years to explain it to the participants in The Next Step program. But you should at least be able to see that Paul believes Jesus Christ is "the first-born of all creation" or what he also calls "the first-born from the dead."

If you can accept the fact that Christ *parabolically* *became* the *Firstborn* Son of God—born in the image and likeness of God—in the same way that everyone else *parabolically* becomes a Child of God, it all begins to

make perfect sense. Just keep in mind that it is nothing more than *parabolic imagery*. It only tells you what the resurrection from the dead will be LIKE.

Those of you who bothered to look up the word *firstborn* in a concordance or online Bible already know that Paul is not the only Apostle to talk in terms of the *parabolic image* in which Jesus Christ is the *Firstborn Son* of God. The Apostle John also makes a similar statement concerning Christ:

*John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood.
(Revelation 1:4–5)*

The essential thing to note about John's reference to Christ as the *Firstborn Son* of God is his allusion to His position as King of kings. That is important because the *parabolic image* in which Jesus Christ is the *Firstborn Son* of God relates directly to the *parabolic image* of His divine appointment as King over all Creation. Every ancient king claimed to be the *firstborn* son of some supreme god or other. They did that, however, only because they had *received* a distorted version of *The Teaching* that God *delivered* to Adam and Eve (and later confirmed to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and the Prophets) before they were ignominiously booted out of the Garden. *The Teaching* that those world-renowned parents of that maximally dysfunctional first family *received* directly from God tells us Jesus Christ *became* the *Firstborn Son* of God and was crowned King of kings when He was resurrected from the dead. That is what the psalmist is *talking about* in this psalm:

*Why are the nations in an uproar,
And the peoples devising a vain thing?
The kings of the earth take their stand,
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed:
"Let us tear their fetters apart,
And cast away their cords from us!"
He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.
Then He will speak to them in His anger*

*And terrify them in His fury:
"But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.
I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son,
Today I have begotten Thee.
Ask of Me, and I will surely give
the nations as Thine inheritance,
And the {very} ends of the earth as Thy possession.
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron,
Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware."
Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;
Take warning, O judges of the earth.
Worship the LORD with reverence,
And rejoice with trembling.
Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry,
and you perish {in} the way,
For His wrath may soon be kindled.
How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!
(Psalm 2:1–12)*

That psalm is fairly well recognized by Old Testament scholars as a coronation hymn that was to be recited at the coronation of some ancient king who claimed to be a divine son of god. But New Testament scholars know full well that the Apostles believed the psalmist was speaking concerning Jesus Christ. That fact is rather hard to deny inasmuch as the authors of the New Testament make reference or allusion to the psalm no less than eighteen times (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35; John 1:49; Acts 4:25–26; 13:33; Phil. 2:12; Heb. 1:2, 5; 5:5; Rev. 2:26–27; 11:18; 12:5; 19:15, 19).

In spite of their great learning, biblical scholars have no idea at all that the psalmist is *parabolically* depicting the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as a coronation ceremony in which He was, LIKE all those ancient kings, *adopted* as the *Firstborn Son* of God. Furthermore, they don't have the slightest clue that the psalmist was using his knowledge of *The Teaching of Moses* to mock all those ancient kings who ignorantly claimed to be the *fulfillment of the promise* that God told Adam and Eve their *seed* would *hand down* to Jesus Christ.

There are various other New Testament allusions or references to the fact that Jesus Christ *became* the *Firstborn Son* of God, that is, King over all Creation, when He was resurrected from the dead. Perhaps the most intriguing is Paul's allusion to Psalm 2:11 in

Philippians 2:12. His mention of “fear and trembling” in that verse is the only obvious indication that Psalm 2 was on his mind when he wrote this:

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, {and} being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW,** of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5–11)*

By and large, Christian commentators recognize that Paul is *talking about* the Coronation of Jesus Christ as King over all Creation in that passage. But they have little, if any, insight into *why* he mentions Christ being given “the name which is above every name.” In the *parabolic imagery* that the Prophets used to explain the part of *The Teaching of Moses* that Paul had in mind, an ancient Near Eastern king assumed a throne name at the time of his coronation, when he was *adopted* as the *firstborn* son of god. That name personified the essence of his divine nature.

Although it is not all that obvious in the English, subtle indications in the Greek text tie the passage above from Philippians together with this next one:

*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in {His} Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. **When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.** For to which of the angels did He ever say,
“THOU ART MY SON,
TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE”?*

*And again,
“I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM
AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME”?
And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says,
“AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.”
And of the angels He says,
“WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS,
AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE.”
But of the Son {He says},
“THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER,
AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER
IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.
THOU HAST LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS
AND HATED LAWLESSNESS;
THEREFORE GOD, THY GOD, HATH ANOINTED THEE
WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE THY COMPANIONS.”
And,
“THOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING DIDST LAY
THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH,
AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF THY HANDS;
THEY WILL PERISH, BUT THOU REMAINEST;
AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD AS A GARMENT,
AND AS A MANTLE THOU WILT ROLL THEM UP;
AS A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED.
BUT THOU ART THE SAME,
AND THY YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END.”
But to which of the angels has He ever said,
“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES
A FOOTSTOOL FOR THY FEET”?
(Hebrews 1:1–13)*

The author of the Book of Hebrews had in mind an intricately detailed *parabolic image* when he wrote this text, but that is beside the point. It is enough to know that—according to the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*—Jesus Christ *parabolically* became the *Firstborn* Son of God by being *parabolically adopted* when He was *parabolically crowned* King over all Creation through His Resurrection from the dead. As you read through that passage, you probably noticed that the writer quotes Psalm 2:7 in verse 5. But did you notice that he also quotes 2 Samuel 7:14 in that verse? He is pointing to the fact that God “built *The House*” of David a second time by resurrecting Jesus Christ from the dead and crowning Him King over all Creation. But one must also keep in mind that the *literal* reality those *parabolic*

images depict is beyond our comprehension. We can only understand it *parabolically*. That is what the Apostle John *meant* when he wrote this:

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope {fixed} on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.
(1 John 3:2–3)

If you think you know what John was *talking about* when he wrote that, it is definitely way past time for you to think again. He has in mind a *parabolic image* that contradicts everything you ever thought rational or logical. That is why so many of the things he wrote in his Gospel and in his epistles are so difficult for the *literalists* to explain. The Truth is, he is using a *parabolic image* in *The Teaching of Moses* that explains an obvious impossibility in a way that we can understand. In the passage above, John himself points out the basic incongruity in what that *parabolic image* teaches and then brings it up again later. The key that ties the two passages together is the phrase “as He is.” When John says that, he is *talking about* that *parabolic image*, which I will explain later. It depicts the relationship of the members of the Body of Jesus Christ—the members of Israel—to the resurrected body of Jesus Christ:

By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.
(1 John 4:17)

We already know from what Paul and John said that Jesus Christ *became* the *Firstborn* Son of God when He was resurrected from the dead. It is not obvious at first glance, but that is exactly what the author of Hebrews 1 has in mind when he says, “when He *again* brings the first-born into the world” (Heb. 1:6). He is using the word *again* to refer to the Resurrection of the body/Body of Christ as an entirely new Creation. Jesus was brought into the world the first time as a mortal baby Who was born in a manger as the *parabolic* Lamb of God. That mortal put on immortality when He was brought into the world “again” as an immortal new Creation through His Resurrection from the dead. But I can hardly expect you to accept that if you do not

understand the *parabolic imagery* related to what Moses said about the creation of mankind in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26–27). So I won't say more about it here. I have been explaining it to participants in The Next Step program for quite some time now.

The only other pertinent bit of information that will prove helpful later on in this article is what the writer of the Book of Hebrews said about Jesus Christ being appointed “*heir* of all things” (Heb. 1:2) and *inheriting* “a more excellent name than” the angels (Heb. 1:4). According to the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*, that happened when He was crowned King over all Creation. The *parabolic image* is one in which the king—the *firstborn* son of some supreme god—is also *the heir of the promise*. Again, the image has to do with the notion that the ancient king *became* the only legitimate *heir* of the god by being *adopted* as his *first-born* son/*heir* at the time of his coronation.

An excellent illustration of the ancient mind-set in regard to kingship can be found in the name of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, who was the last major king to rule over the ancient Assyrian empire. The name Ashurbanipal—*Assur-bani-aplu*—is actually a simple Akkadian (Assyrian) sentence. The name is generally thought to *mean* “the god Ashur is the creator of the heir.” But what it *literally* says is “the god Ashur is the *builder* [in the sense of ‘engenderer’] of the *firstborn*.” In the name Ashurbanipal, the Akkadian verb *bani* (“build”) refers to the divine birth (adoption) of the king as the *firstborn* son/*heir* (*aplu*) of the god Ashur at the time of his coronation. The Hebrew verb (*banah*) from the same Semitic root is used to refer to the Resurrection/Coronation of Jesus Christ as the *Firstborn* Son of God (and *Heir of the promise*) in God's *promise* to David (2 Sam. 7) through the Prophet Nathan. However, Nathan's use of the idiom “build a house” is mocking the ancient Near Eastern *mythological imagery* in which the king was the one who “built *The House*” of the god.

Can You Say Parabolic?

The things I have explained thus far are necessary to your accurate understanding of the parables in which Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of God. However, we still cannot look into the *meaning* of those parables because we have yet to understand *why* God would tell Moses that Israel was His *firstborn* Son if Jesus Christ was actually that Son.

Those of you who have read, understood, and believed what I wrote in *Not All Israel Is Israel* already know that Jesus Christ is Israel. So the short answer to the question concerning how both Jesus Christ and Israel could be the *firstborn* Son of God is this, Since it would seem (just don't tread too heavily on what seems to be in the Scriptures) that there can only be one *firstborn* Son of God, that *firstborn* Son of God is and always has been Israel.

That was easy, wasn't it? All it took to cut the Gordian knot was simple syllogistic reasoning: Jesus Christ is Israel; Israel is the *firstborn* Son of God; therefore, Jesus Christ is the *Firstborn* Son of God. As a logical solution to the problem, it looks fairly neat and tidy; but unfortunately, it doesn't even begin to solve a much more basic problem.

You see, I have already explained that Jesus Christ *parabolically* became the *Firstborn* Son of God when He was *literally* and *physically* resurrected from the dead. Yet, unless I am mistaken, Israel, the *firstborn* Son of God that Jesus Christ *became*, was never *literally* or *physically* resurrected from the dead in the Old Testament. So the fact that Jesus Christ *became* Israel, the *Firstborn* Son of God, when all the other Jews had been "cut off from" Israel doesn't even address the primary issue. It only serves to divert attention from it.

The question is, How could Jesus Christ *become* the *Firstborn* Son of God at the time of His Resurrection if He was already Israel, the *firstborn* Son of God, before He died? Now that I have posed the question, I am going to further infuriate every fool who might chance to read what I write here by giving you the answer to that question.

The only logical solution to the various problems presented by the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching* confirms something I have repeatedly told you: Moses and the other Prophets *always* spoke in parables. Jesus Christ and the Apostles did too. Just keep in mind that a parable does not tell you what something *IS*; it merely tells you what something *IS LIKE*.

If you have read *The Passover Parable* (see the Order Form), you already know that Israel, the *firstborn* Son of God, was *parabolically* resurrected from the dead in a *parabolic pantomime* which I call "the Passover Parable." Moses conducted that *parabolic pantomime* at God's behest. In the *parabolic pantomime* of the Exodus, in which Moses led the sons of Israel out of Egypt and around in the wilderness for forty years before leading

them up to the Promised Land, Israel is *parabolically* depicted as a *firstborn* son who has been "given" to God so that through resurrection from the dead, He might *become* High Priest and King as the *Firstborn* Son of God. So the answer to how Jesus Christ could *become* the *Firstborn* Son of God when He already was as earthly Israel is this: Christ did indeed *become* earthly Israel under the terms of the Old Covenant when He lived on Earth as a man. However, earthly Israel has always been nothing more than a *parabolic image* that depicts the *literal* reality that Heavenly Israel, that is, Jesus Christ, would be *after* His Resurrection.

I have already told you in *Not All Israel Is Israel* that Jesus Christ accepted the terms of the New Covenant that God offered earthly Israel when He was baptized in the River Jordan (pp. 172 ff.). I also told you that was a well-orchestrated *parabolic pantomime*. However, I did not tell you that in that *parabolic pantomime*, Jesus Christ was, *LIKE* ancient Israel, *parabolically* depicted as having *become* Heavenly Israel, the *firstborn* Son of God, by being *parabolically* resurrected from the dead when He came up out of the water. Neither did I tell you that is *why* God Himself joined in the *parabolic pantomime* by declaring that Jesus was His beloved Son (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) immediately *after* He was baptized in the River Jordan. Although that was a public declaration of Jesus Christ's *parabolic adoption* as earthly Israel, the *firstborn* Son of God, under the terms of the New Covenant, it was, at heart, nothing more than a *parabolic* depiction of what would happen *during* and *after* His *literal* and *physical* Resurrection from the dead.

In ordaining the *parabolic pantomime* in which John the Baptist baptized Jesus, God is *parabolically* depicting the reality of *literal* events that will occur *during* and *after* the Resurrection of the body/Body of Jesus Christ. However, we cannot understand *anything* beyond the veil of death except *parabolically*. Therefore, since we have no way of understanding that reality except *parabolically*, the resurrected Christ (Heavenly Israel) and earthly Israel can never be anything more than mirror images of each other. If you are not able to understand the *significance* of that statement, I suggest you memorize it. Maybe one day you will "see" what I mean.

The *parabolic imagery* that underlies the Exodus and the Baptism of Jesus also applies to the *parabolic pantomime* in which Jesus was transfigured. That is, it graphically explains the *meaning* and *significance* of the

parabolic pantomime in which He temporarily assumed His resurrected body (Matt. 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36). On that occasion as well, God joined in the *parabolic pantomime* and once more *parabolically* declared Jesus Christ to be the *Firstborn* Son of God He would *become* through the Resurrection (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). That declaration came *after* Jesus *literally* assumed His *physically* resurrected body and met with Moses and Elijah as part of the *parabolic pantomime*. If you check the context in which that *parabolic pantomime* is recorded, you will see that a week or so earlier (Matthew and Mark say six days; Luke says eight), Jesus had begun teaching His disciples about His death and Resurrection. His Transfiguration was nothing more than a didactic device that He was using to show Peter, James, and John what His Resurrection would be LIKE. Teaching is, after all, the purpose of the parables and *parabolic pantomimes* recorded in the Scriptures.

There should be no doubt that the Apostles talk in terms of Jesus Christ *becoming* the *Firstborn* Son of God when He was *literally* resurrected from the dead. Yet as I have repeatedly told you, it is impossible for anyone to understand that spiritual reality any way other than *parabolically*. So if you have gotten somewhat confused over the years as I explained how one *parabolic image* in the Scriptures points to some other *parabolic image* before both point to the ultimate reality of the Resurrection of the body/Body of Jesus Christ that both describe, perhaps you can see why the Apostles found it easier to refer to the *parabolic imagery* of *The Apostolic Teaching* as though it actually depicts what spiritual reality IS instead of what it IS LIKE.

The Apostolic Teaching that the Apostles taught tells us that when Jesus Christ arose from the dead, the spiritual reality He *became* is in some way LIKE that which God had depicted through the three different *parabolic pantomimes* in which He *parabolically adopted* Israel by declaring Him to be the *Firstborn* Son of God. While the intricacies of that *parabolic imagery* may be difficult for you to comprehend, you can be certain of one thing: After the watershed event to which it points has occurred, no more parables will be necessary. Israel will finally at long last *literally* be the stark reality that Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles have *parabolically* stated He will be.

Pay close attention to the tense of the verbs I used in that last sentence. Israel, the *firstborn* Son of God, is *parabolically* both “The One” and “The Many.” So,

speaking *parabolically*, the past is yet future. Unless, of course, you want to reverse the *parabolic image* and view the future as yet past, as Paul does:

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

(Colossians 3:1–4)

How is it possible for the past to be future and the future to be past, as Paul implies in that and various other passages? It isn't, insofar as our earthly *physical* existence is concerned. But according to the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*, Israel, the *firstborn* Son of God, is not only “The One,” He is also “The Many.” That is why the Resurrection of Israel, the *firstborn* Son of God, is depicted in *The Teaching* by various *parabolic images* which describe not only the resurrection of the *physical* body of Jesus Christ, “The One,” but also the Resurrection of the *physical* Body of Jesus Christ, “The Many.” In *The Teaching*, “The One” and “The Many” are *indivisibly* One and the same. So the Resurrection of Israel, that is, the body/Body of Jesus Christ, includes not only the Resurrection of Christ Himself but also the resurrection of the members of His Body, in spite of the fact that those two events are separated by at least two thousand years.

The obvious contradiction inherent in the use of one *parabolic image* to depict a reality in which two separate *historical* events are *parabolically* one and the same event is one of the ways in which the Prophets were able to state things concerning Israel—the body/Body of Christ—that have remained sealed up in the Hebrew Scriptures until our own time. It is, in fact, the source of the dispensational teaching in which the Church Age is supposedly a time the Prophets knew nothing about. That and other equally ignorant beliefs originated not in the mind of God but in the mind of some arrogant individual who, although he knew nothing at all about the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching of Moses*, was completely dominated by a stupidly insatiable need to say, “I know.” Consequently, he twisted the Truth of *The Teaching* into a lie that Satan intends to use to further his own ends in these Last Days.

If you are a True Believer, you might want to consider what you can learn from the mistakes of others. The angry God of Israel is the God of Truth, not a god of guesses, assumptions, half-truths, and lies. The last time I checked, a half-truth was still a whole lie. So if God did not call you to be a Teacher and equip you to teach the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth, why would you feel compelled to teach others and thereby run the risk of teaching them a lie? That would only invoke the wrath of God. You would do better to put a loaded gun to your head and pull the trigger. Nonetheless, it is a foregone conclusion that fools will take what I teach, mix it with the lies they now believe, and teach the resulting concoction to folks who will never have an opportunity to hear the Truth. You should strive to avoid their fate. The Truth about the role of the Teacher is, after all, just as Jesus said:

And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit; nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil {man} out of the evil {treasure} brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."
(Luke 6:39–45)

If you can't see how the words of Jesus apply to those who are ignorantly teaching lies about God, I suggest that you find someone who is qualified to remove the log from your eye. And until the one from whom you have been getting your understanding of the Scriptures notifies you that you have been fully trained and are qualified to teach, it might be best for you to refrain from teaching others what you *think* you understand. Just a thought.

Answer Me! Don't Change the Subject

Now that we have all that information concerning the Resurrection of the body/Body of Christ tucked securely in our bag, we can take a look at how Jesus used the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching of Moses* to speak in parables and cryptically refer to Himself as the *Firstborn Son of God*, the divinely appointed King over all Creation and *Heir of the promise* that God gave to Adam and Eve. The following passage from the Gospel of Matthew is perhaps the most humorous example of how Jesus used the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching of Moses* that they claimed to be *handing down*. As you read what Matthew wrote, make a mental note of the question the leaders of the Jews asked Jesus:

*And when He had come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "I will ask you one thing too, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John was from what {source,} from heaven or from men?" And they {began} reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude; for they all hold John to be a prophet." And answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." He also said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."
(Matthew 21:23–27)*

Did you pay *extremely* close attention to what you just read? The chief priests and elders of the Jews asked Jesus where He got the authority to do what He had been doing. First, He stymies them by saying He will answer their question only if they answer His. Then, when they refuse to answer His question, He refuses to answer theirs. But the humorous part of their exchange becomes apparent in what Jesus says next. After telling the leaders of the Jews that He will not answer their question, He immediately goes ahead and does just that. But He does so with a mocking, taunting ridicule of their ignorance of *The Teaching of Moses*. He tells them the following parable about a man who sent his two sons to work in his vineyard:

"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' And he answered and said, 'I will, sir'; and he did not go. And he came to the second and said the same thing. But he answered and said, 'I will not'; {yet} he afterward regretted {it} and went. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The latter." Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax-gatherers and harlots did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him."

(Matthew 21:28–32)

Do you remember what I told you about the importance of taking into account the *context* in which a passage of Scripture occurs? (See *The Way, The Truth, The Life* seminar tapes.) I told you that if you don't understand how something in the Scriptures fits into its immediate context, you can't even begin to understand *why* it is included in the Scriptures. I also told you that if you don't understand the overall message of the Scriptures, you sometimes can't even understand *what* is being said. As you read what Jesus said in that parable, I trust you kept in mind the *context* in which He said it. If you did not, you certainly did not understand what He *meant* by what He *said*.

The chief priests and elders of the Jews asked Jesus where He had gotten the authority to do the things He had been doing, and He refused to tell them. Then He says: "But what do you think? A man had two sons ..." and tells them a parable about a man who sent his two sons to work in the vineyard. He concludes by asking the Jewish leaders a question that is intended to get them to answer their own question: "Which of the two did the will of his father?" When they condemn themselves by their own answer, He then tells them what they have done:

"Truly I say to you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax-gatherers and harlots did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him."

(Matthew 21:31b–32)

It is impossible to understand *what* Jesus *meant* by the parable He told the chief priests and elders on that occasion if you don't know that John the Baptist was baptizing any Jew who was willing to *parabolically* become God's *firstborn* Son and go to work in God's *vineyard*. That is, he was baptizing every former member of Israel who was willing to *parabolically* become the *firstborn* son of God in the same way that Israel had *parabolically* become God's *firstborn* Son—by being baptized in the River Jordan and accepting the terms of God's New Covenant just as Israel had been baptized in the Reed Sea and had accepted the terms of God's Old Covenant. Knowing that, it immediately becomes apparent that the *parabolic* "man" who sent his two *parabolic* "sons" to work in his vineyard is God.

Jesus is *parabolically* saying that God spoke first to His *parabolic* son Israel—that is, to any Jew who was willing to accept the terms of the New Covenant—through John the Baptist, telling His *parabolic* son to go to work in His *parabolic* vineyard. At that time, some of the Jews, including the tax-gatherers and harlots, said they would go, but then found it impossible to abide by the terms of God's New Covenant. For that reason they were prevented from going to work in God's *parabolic* vineyard. Therefore, God spoke to His *parabolic* Son Israel again through John the Baptist, telling Him to go to work in the same *parabolic* vineyard. The only thing different this time was the fact that Jesus Christ was the One Who accepted the terms of God's New Covenant and, after being tested and approved in the wilderness, reluctantly went to work in God's *parabolic* vineyard as the *parabolic* *Firstborn* Son of God. The point of Jesus' parable is, that's where He got the authority to do what He had been doing. God told Him to do it.

As I explained in *Not All Israel Is Israel*, at the time of His Baptism by John, Jesus Christ was the only Person in Israel Who had not been "cut off from" Israel. That's the source of the *parabolic* *image* of the second son. Jesus was alluding to the fact that every other member of Israel, including those that John the Baptist had baptized, had ended up being "cut off from" Israel because they were unable to do what God had told His *firstborn* Son Israel to do. And in spite of the fact that Jesus did not want to go to work in God's *parabolic* vineyard, He went anyway. In saying that He was reluctant to go, He is alluding to the *parabolic* *imagery* related to His wandering in the wilderness for forty days as the New Israel. That corresponds to Israel's wandering in

the wilderness for forty years because they had been unwilling to go to work in God's "vineyard" (Num. 13:1–14:45). The point of what Jesus says to the chief priests and elders, however, is that they were more despicable than the tax-gatherers and harlots because they had not even been willing to be baptized and *parabolically* become the firstborn son of God.

You should be able to see by now that Jesus was ridiculing the Jewish leaders' ignorance of *The Teaching of Moses* by *parabolically* explaining to them where He got the authority to do what He had been doing: God told Him to do it. But if you think His acid wit stopped there, you should, perhaps, think again. He goes on to talk about the "vineyard" into which God had sent Him to work. This time, however, He brings in a bit more of the *parabolic imagery* that I explained earlier. He does so to ridicule the pompous, pious religious leaders of His day because they were absolutely certain they knew what God was about. Their counterparts in the Church today could learn a lot from what He says to them. Too bad they don't have ears to hear. Jesus says this:

"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey. And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance.' And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the {proper} seasons." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER {stone;} THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'? Therefore I say to you, *the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the*

fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. And when they sought to seize Him, they feared the multitudes, because they held Him to be a prophet.

(Matthew 21:33–46)

I assume that since the chief priests and elders could see that Jesus was *talking about* them in a derogatory manner, you can at least comprehend that much. But I doubt that you understand much at all about what Jesus *meant* by what He said. It helps a bit to know that He begins by quoting something the Prophet Isaiah says about God's *vineyard*:

*Let me sing now for my well-beloved
A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.
My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.
And He dug it all around, removed its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.
And He built a tower in the middle of it,
And hewed out a wine vat in it;
Then He expected {it} to produce {good} grapes,
But it produced {only} worthless ones.
"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge between Me and My vineyard.
What more was there to do for My vineyard
that I have not done in it?
Why, when I expected {it} to produce {good} grapes
did it produce worthless ones?
So now let Me tell you
what I am going to do to My vineyard:
I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed;
I will break down its wall
and it will become trampled ground.
And I will lay it waste;
It will not be pruned or hoed,
But briars and thorns will come up.
I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it."
For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
And the men of Judah His delightful plant.
Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed;
For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.
(Isaiah 5:1–7)*

Did you notice Isaiah is speaking *parabolically*? Did you also see that he explains the *meaning* of the two primary (but certainly not the only) *parabolic images* that he uses? He says:

*For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,
And the men of Judah His delightful plant.
(Isaiah 5:7a)*

It is important that you understand the *meaning* of those *parabolic images*. The “vineyard” of the Lord is a “house”; to be more specific, it is “The House” of Israel. And the “vine” that God “planted” in that “vineyard” is the men of Judah. You need to keep that information in mind if you ever intend to understand what Moses and the other Prophets have to say about the “vineyard” and the “vine.” Both of them are people.

When most people read the parables in which Jesus *talked about* the vineyard of God, they tend to think He is *talking about* the *literal* land that God *promised* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because a vineyard is *literal* land. But that’s not the way the *parabolic imagery* of the Prophets works. A parable only tells us how one thing IS LIKE another. The thing being described is not necessarily anything at all LIKE the other except in the way in which the two are being compared. Jesus isn’t *talking about* a *literal* piece of land *as though* it were a *vineyard* that needs to be tended. He is *talking about* the sons of Israel *as though* they are (corporately) a *vineyard* that needs to be tended. Jesus definitely wants that understood in this case. That’s *why* He quotes what Isaiah said about God’s *vineyard*. He knew that anyone who sincerely wanted to understand the *parabolic imagery* He was using could find it defined in Isaiah.

The next *parabolic image* that you need to clearly understand is that of the *vine* that Isaiah tells us God planted in His *vineyard*. Isaiah says that *vine* is the men of Judah. But you should also be aware that the Prophet Hosea says this:

*Israel is a luxuriant vine;
He produces fruit for himself.
The more his fruit,
The more altars he made;
The richer his land,
The better he made the {sacred} pillars.
(Hosea 10:1)*

Now why do you think God’s Prophet Hosea would disagree with God’s other Prophet, Isaiah, over the identification of the *parabolic vine* that God planted in His *parabolic vineyard*? Because he is referring to the kingdom of Israel, the ten tribes of Israel that comprised the Northern Kingdom. I told you in *Not All Israel Is Israel* (pp. 131 ff.) that those folks were “cut off from” Israel. That happened at the time when both Hosea and Isaiah were prophesying.

In contrast to the Prophet Hosea, however, Isaiah is speaking *parabolically* concerning those who remained in Israel after the northern tribes had been “cut off from” Israel. So he identifies God’s *vine* as the Southern Kingdom, “the men of Judah.” Later on, Jeremiah tells us God said this about “The Remnant” of Israel, that is, all those who remained in Israel after the northern tribes had been “cut off from” Israel:

*“For long ago I broke your yoke
{And} tore off your bonds;
But you said, ‘I will not serve!’
For on every high hill
And under every green tree
You have lain down as a harlot.
Yet I planted you a choice vine,
A completely faithful seed.
How then have you turned yourself before Me
Into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?
Although you wash yourself with lye
And use much soap,
The stain of your iniquity is before Me,”
declares the Lord GOD.
“How can you say, ‘I am not defiled,
I have not gone after the Baals’?
Look at your way in the valley!
Know what you have done!
You are a swift young camel entangling her ways,
A wild donkey accustomed to the wilderness,
That sniffs the wind in her passion.
In {the time of} her heat who can turn her away?
All who seek her will not become weary;
In her month they will find her.
Keep your feet from being unshod
And your throat from thirst;
But you said, ‘It is hopeless!
No! For I have loved strangers,
And after them I will walk.’”
(Jeremiah 2:20–25)*

The *parabolic image* in which Corporate Israel is depicted as both a *vineyard* and a *vine* that the Lord planted in that *vineyard* relates directly to something that Moses states *parabolically* in “*The Song of Moses.*” Perhaps I should show you that as well:

*“For they are a nation lacking in counsel,
And there is no understanding in them.
Would that they were wise, that they understood this,
That they would discern their future!
How could one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Unless their Rock had sold them,
And the LORD had given them up?
Indeed their rock is not like our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves judge this.
For their vine is from the vine of Sodom,
And from the fields of Gomorrah;
Their grapes are grapes of poison,
Their clusters, bitter.
Their wine is the venom of serpents,
And the deadly poison of cobras.”*
(Deuteronomy 32:28–33)

To understand what Moses says about the *vine* in that instance, one must first understand the ritualistic purpose for which wine was used by the people who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah. So, without my telling you where the *parabolic image* of the *vine* comes from or *why* Moses and the Prophets used it to speak concerning Israel, you should at least be able to comprehend that Jesus was referring to Himself *parabolically* as a *vine* when He says this:

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every {branch} that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither {can} you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By

this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and {so} prove to be My disciples.”
(John 15:1–8)

Did you hear what Jesus said? He said, “I am the *true vine.*” His point is, the Jews were ignorantly claiming that they were still Israel, the *vine* that God had planted in His *vineyard*, when they were no longer that *vine*. Individually, one by one, they had been “cut off from” the *vine*—“*The House*” of Israel—until Jesus Christ became that *vine* and ratified the New Covenant with the God of Israel. This is how Jeremiah records the divine decree that resulted in Jesus Christ *becoming* the sole surviving Member of “*The House*” of Israel:

*“Why should I pardon you?
Your sons have forsaken Me
And sworn by those who are not gods.
When I had fed them to the full,
They committed adultery
And trooped to the harlot’s house.
They were well-fed lusty horses,
Each one neighing after his neighbor’s wife.
Shall I not punish these {people,}”
declares the LORD,
“And on a nation such as this
Shall I not avenge Myself?
Go up through her vine rows and destroy,
But do not execute a complete destruction;
Strip away her branches,
For they are not the LORD’s.
For the house of Israel and the house of Judah
Have dealt very treacherously with Me,”
declares the LORD.
They have lied about the LORD
And said, “Not He;
Misfortune will not come on us;
And we will not see sword or famine.
And the prophets are {as} wind,
And the word is not in them.
Thus it will be done to them!”
(Jeremiah 5:7–13)*

The silent, unseen wrath of God descended on the Jews because, as Jeremiah says, “they have lied about the Lord” (v. 12a). They corrupted *The Teaching of Moses*. That completely unobtrusive wrath is currently descending on the Church because the Church did

exactly the same thing. It corrupted *The Apostolic Teaching*. Jesus knew that would happen. (See "If You Plan to Reap What You Sow, You Had Better Watch What You Plant," *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1998.) That is why He warns His disciples to watch out lest they, too, be "cut off from" Him, the *true Vine*. Why should they be careful? Because "My Father is the vinedresser."

Jesus' point is, God, not man, is the One Who ultimately tends the *vine*—"The House" of Israel—that He had become, and He knows all too well that God will "cut off from" Israel, that is, from the Body of Christ, anyone who cannot show that he legitimately belongs on that *vine*. In the wisdom of God, the only way that anyone can prove themselves to be a part of that *Vine* is by not lying about Who God is or what He has done. That is nigh onto impossible without an understanding of *The Apostolic Teaching*.

The *parabolic image* of Israel as the *vine* helps explain the *parabolic imagery* related to the vine-growers that Jesus used. He was referring to the leaders of Israel, the ones who were supposed to be "tending the *vine*" of Israel by teaching *The Teaching* and ensuring that all known offenders were "cut off from" the *vine* by being removed from Israel. However, they were unwilling to do that. They killed the Prophets that God sent to *restore The Teaching* which they themselves had corrupted. And instead of doing their job so that God's *vine* would provide Him the produce that He was seeking, that is, instead of encouraging people to give God the thanks, praise, and recognition He rightly deserves, they did their best to keep it for themselves.

There Is More Than Meets the Eye

Finally, we come to the point of the Parable of the Vineyard as far as Jesus was concerned. To understand His point, however, we need to go back and review the context in which He told the parable. The chief priests and elders had asked Him where He got the authority to do what He had been doing. He told them He would not tell them that because they refused to answer His question concerning John the Baptist. Then He asked them: "But what do you think? A man had two sons ..." and told them the parable about a man who told his two sons to go to work in the vineyard. After the chief priests and elders condemned themselves by telling Him what they thought about the son who wouldn't go to work, Jesus cryptically told them

He got His authority from God because He was the *parabolic* Son of God Who went to work in the *vineyard*. Then He assailed them for not responding to God's offer to anyone who was willing to be baptized and thereby *parabolically* become His Son.

After Jesus finished telling the chief priests and elders the parable about the man who sent his two sons to work in the vineyard, He said, "Listen to another parable" and then told them the parable about the landowner who rented out a vineyard to vine-growers who refused to pay rent. If you fail to realize that Jesus is still answering their question concerning where He got the authority to do what He was doing, you will miss the point of the second parable as well. I have explained the basic *parabolic imagery* related to the *vineyard* and the *vine* only so that you can understand the point that Jesus was making when He told the parable. Let me remind you what He says about Himself as the *Firstborn* Son of God:

"But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance.' And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him."
(Matthew 21:37-39)

The crucial link in the mind of Christ that ties the Parable of the Vineyard together with the parable of the man who sent his two sons to work in the vineyard is the *parabolic image* of God sending His Son into the *vineyard*. Both parables are in response to the question Jesus was asked about the source of His authority. And the point of both parables is that is where He got the authority to do what He had been doing: He was the *parabolic* Son that God sent to the *vineyard*. Everything else in the two parables is ancillary to that primary image. But having reminded the leaders of the Jews that they had rejected God's offer to become His *firstborn* Son of God, He tells them they are doing the very same thing for which the Prophets condemned Israel all along. Their ancestors had spurned every overture on God's part by killing the Prophets. And they are now planning to kill Him, the *Firstborn* Son of God and *Heir of the promise*, because they mistakenly assume they can seize *the promise* for themselves. Knowing that they do not realize they have incited the wrath of God, Jesus concludes His Parable of the Vineyard by asking them:

"Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?"
(Matthew 21:40)

When the chief priests and Pharisees respond with a self-righteous smugness and thereby condemn themselves again, Jesus says:

"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it."
(Matthew 21:43)

Now, before one can understand that statement and the Parable of the Wedding Feast that Jesus told immediately after He said it, one needs to know that the *Kingdom of God* is the same thing as *the promise*. It is the *Vine*, Israel, Jesus Christ, or the Word of God—*The Teaching* itself—which is sometimes *parabolically* depicted in *The Teaching* as bread and wine, that is, as a meal. Since I have already explained that *parabolic imagery* elsewhere (see "If You Plan to Reap What You Sow, You Had Better Watch What You Plant," *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1998), there is no need to say anything more about it here.

In the Parable of the Vineyard, Jesus alluded to several different *parabolic images* that Moses and the Prophets used to simultaneously depict both His First and Second Coming. His Second Coming is what He had in mind when He mentioned the owner of the vineyard coming to destroy the vine-growers who had killed the *heir*. But the *parabolic image* of Himself as *the Heir of the promise* is what prompted Jesus to tell yet another parable in which He depicts Himself as the King of Israel, that is, as the *Firstborn* Son of God that He would *become* through His Resurrection from the dead. But in this, the third parable that Jesus told in response to their question concerning where He got His authority, Jesus incorporates various other *parabolic images* related to His Second Coming:

And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son. And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. Again he sent out other slaves saying, "Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen

and my fattened livestock are {all} butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast." But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire. Then he said to his slaves, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find {there,} invite to the wedding feast.'" And those slaves went out into the streets, and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" For many are called, but few {are} chosen."

(Matthew 22:1–14)

Most of the *parabolic imagery* that Jesus used in that parable is generally understood. God is the king who gave a wedding feast for his son. Jesus Christ is the son. The Jews—the *literal* sons of Israel—are the ones who were invited to the wedding feast but refused to come. The slaves of the king that the sons of Israel killed are the Prophets of Israel. The city that was burned is Jerusalem, which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, sacked and burned in 586 B.C. Gentile Christians are the dinner guests whom God ordered to be brought in when the invited guests—the Jews—refused to attend. Those things are more or less self-evident, but the fundamental *parabolic image* that Jesus used in the parable is not understood at all. That is the *parabolic image* of the wedding feast.

I have already explained the *parabolic image* of the meal on which Jesus based His parable. I told you the Prophets *parabolically* depict *The Teaching of Moses* as a sacrificial meal. So the food served at the wedding feast the sons of Israel had been invited to attend was *The Teaching of Moses* that Jesus Christ *delivered* to the Apostles. As I told you on *The Way, The Truth, The Life* tapes, God sent the Prophets to Israel time and time again to *restore The Teaching of Moses*. That is why, in this parable, Jesus depicts the Prophets as inviting the sons

of Israel to attend the wedding feast of God's *Firstborn* Son, Israel. *Parabolically* speaking, the Prophets were inviting the sons of Israel to attend a banquet and eat the same food—*The Teaching*—that Moses provided in the wilderness. More often than not, however, the sons of Israel refused God's invitation. That is, they refused to believe what the Prophets told them.

The *parabolic image* of the wedding feast on which Jesus based His parable has a much deeper *meaning* and *significance* than I can explain here. One of the first things one needs to know to understand the *meaning* and *significance* of the wedding feast is *why* the Prophets spoke in terms of that particular image. The short answer is they did it to mock a popular Canaanite version of the ancient *sacred marriage* ceremony. Ancient kings participated in that ceremony to "build a house," "raise up a seed," or "make a name," and thereby ensure a stable dynasty. But ordinary folks in ancient Canaan were seeking to accomplish something similar through their practice of an analogous ritual. I have explained some things regarding that practice in articles I have written for this newsletter. (See "The Sad, Sordid History of the People of God," *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1996 and "So Why Would a Nomad 'Build a House' and Settle Down?" *The Voice of Elijah*®, October 1997.) I have also explained other things related to the *parabolic image* of the *sacred marriage* ceremony in *The Voice of Elijah*® *Update* and The Next Step program. So there is no need to explain it further at this time.

It's Time to Head Home Now

If a poll was taken, as the current trend seems to be, one of the most well-known parables of Jesus would undoubtedly be the parable He told about the prodigal son. Most Christians have been taught that parable is a nifty little story that Jesus told to emphasize the tremendous willingness of God to forgive. If they only knew ...

The Truth is, the Parable of the Prodigal Son is another parable in which Jesus alludes to Himself as the Son of God. As I have already told you, the *parabolic imagery* Jesus uses in that parable also underlies *The Hymn of the Pearl*, which was a popular piece of Christian literature in the second century. [See "Poetry Ain't All Bad (Contrary to What I Thought Yesterday)," *The Voice of Elijah*® *Update*, February 1993.] To understand what Jesus *meant* by the Parable of the Prodigal

Son, one must take into account the context in which He told it. Here is what Luke tells us about that:

Now all the tax-gatherers and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes {began} to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."
(Luke 15:1-2)

Keep that in mind. If you don't, you will miss the point of the three parables that Jesus told on this occasion. Luke tells us Jesus responded to the self-righteous grumbling of the Pharisees and scribes this way:

And He told them this parable, saying, "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I tell you that in the same way, there will be {more} joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."
(Luke 15:3-7)

If you ever intend to understand what Jesus says in the two parables that follow this one, you need to pay close attention not only to *what* He says here but also to *why* He says it. The Pharisees and scribes were upset because "all the tax-gatherers and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him." They were saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." So Jesus mocks their self-righteous indignation by telling them a parable in which He explains *why* He is speaking to and eating with people that they consider despicable: It is because the tax-gatherers and sinners are LIKE a sheep that has been lost and needs to be found. Don't overlook the caustic bite in the *parabolic image* that He uses to depict the Pharisees and scribes. They are the ninety-nine *righteous* people He has left LIKE sheep in open pasture. His point is, the one lost sheep He is looking for is more important to Him than the ninety-nine He can easily identify. You will fail to see the sarcasm in that if you are not aware that Jesus frequently ridiculed the Pharisees and scribes for their self-righteous hypocrisy.

Having told the Pharisees and scribes the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Jesus continues His response to their “we’re better than these sinners” grumbling with yet a second parable. In this parable, He introduces a more complex set of *parabolic images*:

“Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!’ In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

(Luke 15:8–10)

Don’t overlook the obvious. Jesus began by telling a parable based on a single *parabolic image* which depicts Him as a shepherd. In the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*, the messianic King of Israel (the Firstborn Son of God and *Heir of the promise*) is depicted as a shepherd with the “sheep” of “*The House*” of Israel as subjects in His Kingdom. He picks up the pace in His second parable by introducing a more complex set of *parabolic images*, but He says nothing that He has not already said in the first parable. That is because the purpose of the second parable is to mock the Pharisees and scribes for their ignorance of *The Teaching of Moses*. Had they known what the Prophets had said, they would have understood the *parabolic imagery* He used. “*The Woman*,” “*The House*,” and “*The Light*,” as well as the money which is the focus of the parable, are *parabolic images* that the Prophets have explained in the Hebrew Scriptures.

While Jesus was telling the second parable—for no reason other than to mock the ignorance of those who claimed to be teaching *The Teaching of Moses*—a deep-seated sarcasm welled up within Him. That prompted Him to immediately launch into the Parable of the Prodigal Son. That parable is directed straight at the Pharisees’ and scribes’ self-righteous attitude toward the tax-gatherers and sinners:

And He said, “A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ And he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a

journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need. And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving {anything} to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.”’ And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion {for him,} and ran and embraced him, and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.’ And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and {began} inquiring what these things might be. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ But he became angry, and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and {began} entreating him. But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you, and I have never neglected a command of yours; and {yet} you have never given me a kid, that I might be merry with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ And he said to him, ‘{My} child, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and {has begun} to live, and {was} lost and has been found.’”

(Luke 15:11–32)

Most people do not understand that the function of a parable is to tell us how one thing IS LIKE another. So they assume the Parable of the Prodigal Son is just an illustration of how forgiving God is. Their ignorance

in that regard is understandable. The *parabolic imagery* that Jesus is using will make little sense to anyone who wants to see a *literal* connection between the *parabolic imagery* and the reality He is describing. The *parabolic images* that depict Jesus Christ as the *Firstborn Son of God* are not fixed. They can be molded and adapted to fit in with any of the other *parabolic images* the Prophets used. But in every case, the sole purpose of the *parabolic imagery* is to tell us how the resurrected body/Body of Jesus Christ IS LIKE this or LIKE that.

You should at least be able to see that the feast in the Parable of the Prodigal Son is essentially the same *parabolic image* as the wedding feast in the parable that we looked at earlier. It tells us that those who hear and understand *The Teaching* are LIKE guests at a dinner of some sort. As far as the Prophets are concerned, the meal consumed at God's banquet is always Israel, that is, Jesus Christ, the sacrificial Lamb of God, Who is also *The Teaching*. So the feast that God prepared for Israel, His *Firstborn Son* and *Heir of the promise*, is *The Teaching*.

I have already told you in *Not All Israel Is Israel* that Jesus Christ was LIKE ancient Israel in that He came to a complete understanding of *The Teaching* during His temptation in the wilderness. (See *Not All Israel Is Israel*, p. 179.) So the point He is making in the Parable of the Prodigal Son is that the tax-gatherers and sinners, as they listened to Him teach, were feasting on *The Teaching* that God had once again provided for the sons of Israel. The Pharisees and scribes, on the other hand, were standing around LIKE the elder brother, grumbling and refusing to have any part of what Jesus taught. He is ridiculing them for being upset that He is associating with people they considered despicable. So you see once more that a parable does not *literally* tell you what IS; it merely tells you what is, IS LIKE. The Jews had long been Israel, God's *firstborn Son*, before Jesus Christ *became* Israel. They had access to everything that belonged to God all along, but because of their ignorance, they never availed themselves of it.

Jesus' depiction of Himself as the younger son and the Pharisees and scribes as the elder son is somewhat similar to the *parabolic imagery* He used in His parable about the two sons that God sent to work in the vineyard. However, in contrast to His straightforward use of the *parabolic imagery* related to the *firstborn Son of God* in the other parables we have looked at, He has added a complex twist to the *parabolic image* of

Himself as the resurrected *Firstborn Son of God* by *parabolically* depicting the tax-gatherers and sinners as members of His resurrected Body. That comes out in His statement, "for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found."

That one statement is the only clear indication in the Parable of the Prodigal Son as to how Jesus is using the *parabolic imagery* related to Israel, the *Firstborn Son of God* and *Heir of the promise*. When He says, "for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again," He is pointing to the *parabolic imagery* that underlies the three *parabolic pantomimes* in which Israel, that is, Jesus Christ Himself, is depicted as rising from the dead: the Passover Parable, His Baptism by John the Baptist, and His Transfiguration. But when Jesus says, "he was lost, and has been found," He is alluding to the two parables in which He depicted the tax-gatherers and sinners as a sheep and a coin that were lost. Therefore, we know that He is *parabolically* identifying them as the lost members of His resurrected Body.

The three *parabolic pantomimes* that I explained earlier tell us what the *literal* Resurrection of Israel, the body/Body of Jesus Christ, God's *Firstborn Son* and *Heir of the promise*, IS LIKE. However, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus is telling us what the *parabolic pantomime* of His Baptism was LIKE. It was *as though* Israel, God's *firstborn Son*, had come back to life and God had provided *The Teaching* as a feast in celebration. If you think this is the only time that a *parabolic image* in the Scriptures points to and explains some other *parabolic image* or *parabolic pantomime*, think again. It happens *all the time*.

The *parabolic imagery* the Prophets used to *talk about* the future of Israel is incredibly complex and intricately intertwined. But it produces a magnificent tapestry that depicts in precise detail the birth, life, death, and Resurrection of the body/Body of Jesus Christ, telling us what those *literal* events will be LIKE. Make note of my use of the future tense. It is an allusion to the fact that the Prophets intentionally encrypted *The Teaching* by *parabolically* telling us how the Resurrection of "The One," Jesus Christ, IS just LIKE the resurrection of "The Many." Then they tell us how the Resurrection of "The One," Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of "The Many" are LIKE something else entirely. Or to put it in terms of the *parabolic image* that I mentioned earlier, they tell us how the past is yet future. Then they use the Hebrew Prophetic Perfect ... ■



The Voice of Elijah[®] publishes articles based on the findings of The Elijah Project, a private research group headed by Larry D. Harper. In this column we seek answers to general-interest questions concerning the findings, purpose, and philosophy of this project.

*Editor: It is quite apparent that Satan has done his best over the years to see that the Scriptures have been mistranslated whenever and wherever possible, to hide important elements of the Truth from the eyes of True Believers. It is also clear that one way he has managed to do this is by inducing Bible translators to leave out the word **the** at critical points in their translations. As you have shown us, this simple three-letter word can change the meaning of what we read. For instance, there is obviously a big difference between "the Law" and "law," "The Man" and "man," and "The Many" and "many." Since Satan seems to prefer that we think in generalities instead of specifics, it makes sense that he would do his utmost to see that the definite article **the** is excluded from the biblical text as much as possible, to hide and distort the Truth. Although you have already shown us several examples where Satan has done this, could you show us a few more examples where the Truth has been hidden or distorted using this method? For instance, a discussion of "the Satan" would be especially interesting if you feel inclined to discuss it.*

Elijah: As I recall, I have already explained the meaning and significance of "the Satan" in The Next Step program. So I see no need to cover the same ground here. The information is already available to anyone who is interested. However, an intriguing example of

how Satan has managed to distort the Truth can be found in this passage:

*In the beginning God created the heavens and **the earth**. And **the earth** was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.
(Genesis 1:1–2)*

The Hebrew word translated "earth" in those two verses is one of the most frequently used words in the Hebrew Scriptures. The ancients used it to refer not only to the whole planet but also to the "land" in which a specific people lived. For example, Moses uses it in each one of these three verses:

*"And it shall come about, when the LORD your God brings you into **the land** where you are entering to possess it, that you shall place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Are they not across the Jordan, west of the way toward the sunset, in **the land** of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh? For you are about to cross the Jordan to go in to possess **the land** which the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall possess it and live in it."
(Deuteronomy 11:29–31)*

Now, since the Prophets could use the same word to refer not only to the whole of the planet but also to just a part, what do you think they did? Well, the first thing they did is what they always did: They intentionally confused their listeners by speaking *parabolically*. But along the way, they also cryptically described specific events that would involve the entire Earth rather than just a part of it. That is, they sometimes concealed what they said by making it appear they were referring to a specific land instead of the whole Earth. Look at what the Prophet Isaiah says about the Time of the End:

*And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved, that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say,
"How the oppressor has ceased,
{And how} fury has ceased!
The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,*

The scepter of rulers
 Which used to strike the peoples in fury
 with unceasing strokes,
 Which subdued the nations in anger
 with unrestrained persecution.
The whole earth is at rest {and} is quiet;
 They break forth into shouts of joy.
 Even the cypress trees rejoice over you,
 {and} the cedars of Lebanon, {saying,}
 ‘Since you were laid low,
 no {tree} cutter comes up against us.’
 Sheol from beneath is excited over you
 to meet you when you come;
 It arouses for you the spirits of the dead,
 all the leaders of **the earth**;
 It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.
 They will all respond and say to you,
 ‘Even you have been made weak as we,
 You have become like us.
 Your pomp {and} the music of your harps
 Have been brought down to Sheol;
 Maggots are spread out {as your bed} beneath you,
 And worms are your covering.’
How you have fallen from heaven,
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!
You have been cut down to the earth,
 You who have weakened the nations!
 But you said in your heart,
 ‘I will ascend to heaven;
 I will raise my throne above the stars of God,
 And I will sit on the mount of assembly
 In the recesses of the north.
 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
 I will make myself like the Most High.’
 Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,
 To the recesses of the pit.
 Those who see you will gaze at you,
 They will ponder over you, {saying,}
 ‘Is this the man who made **the earth** tremble,
 Who shook kingdoms,
 Who made **the world** like a wilderness
 And overthrew its cities,
 Who did not allow his prisoners to {go} home?’
 All the kings of the nations lie in glory,
 Each in his own tomb.
 But you have been cast out of your tomb
 Like a rejected branch,
 Clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword,

Who go down to the stones of the pit,
 Like a trampled corpse.
 You will not be united with them in burial,
 Because you have ruined your country,
 You have slain your people.
 May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever.
 Prepare for his sons a place of slaughter
 Because of the iniquity of their fathers.
 They must not arise and take possession of **the earth**
 And fill the face of **the world** with cities.”
 (Isaiah 14:3–21)

It is clear that Isaiah is *talking about* events that occur on the Earth in general as opposed to occurring in some specific land. But it isn’t as clear that he is *parabolically* describing what will happen after Satan—the *literal* king of the *parabolic* Babylon that John describes in the Book of Revelation—makes his appearance as the Antichrist. While Isaiah’s prophecy has a *parabolic* fulfillment in historical events that have already occurred—and may yet occur—as a harbinger of the real thing (see “Prophet Predicts Death of Hussein,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, October 1990), it speaks specifically concerning Satan’s exile from Heaven and his stupidly impersonating Christ. (See “That’s Why He’s Called AntiChrist!” *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1992.) For example, the Prophet is referring specifically to Satan being cast out of Heaven and down to Earth when he says this:

“How you have fallen from heaven,
 O star of the morning, son of the dawn!
You have been cut down to the earth,
 You who have weakened the nations!”
 (Isaiah 14:12)

In that verse, the Hebrew word that can be translated as either “earth” or “land” obviously refers to the Earth because it is parallel with another Hebrew word that refers to a place called “heaven.” However, it is not at all obvious in the Hebrew text that the word *earth* even has the definite article in that instance, because the definite article in Hebrew always assimilates into the preposition *to* and disappears. But the article is clearly nowhere to be found at the end of the passage when the Prophet makes this allusion to the *physical* Resurrection of the Righteous and their *literal* possession of the Earth as a *parabolic inheritance* at the Time of the End:

*“Prepare for his sons a place of slaughter
Because of the iniquity of their fathers.
They must not arise and take possession of the earth
And fill the face of the world with cities.”
(Isaiah 14:21)*

Although Isaiah does not use the definite article with the term *earth* in that case, he is clearly referring to the entire planet because he parallels “earth” with “world.” But the only thing we can learn from that is that the presence or absence of the definite article is no sure indicator as to whether the Prophets were using the word to point to “the” Earth as opposed to some part of it. However, if we apply our understanding of the Hebrew term translated “earth” to this next passage, some interesting details about Satan’s impersonation of Jesus Christ become a bit more evident:

*Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, “Thus says the Lord GOD,
“You had the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your covering:
The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond;
The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper;
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald;
And the gold, the workmanship of your settings
and sockets,
Was in you.
On the day that you were created
They were prepared.
You were the anointed cherub who covers,
And I placed you {there.}
**You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.**
You were blameless in your ways
From the day you were created,
Until unrighteousness was found in you.
By the abundance of your trade
You were internally filled with violence,
And you sinned;
**Therefore I have cast you as profane
From the mountain of God.**
And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.
Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;*

*You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.
**I cast you to the ground;
I put you before kings,
That they may see you.**
By the multitude of your iniquities,
In the unrighteousness of your trade,
You profaned your sanctuaries.
Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you;
It has consumed you,
And I have turned you to ashes on the earth
In the eyes of all who see you.
All who know you among the peoples
Are appalled at you;
You have become terrified,
And you will be no more.””
(Ezekiel 28:11–19)*

The translator of that passage obviously didn’t realize that the Prophet was using the Hebrew Prophetic Perfect to prophesy concerning future events. That is why his translation speaks in terms of the past even though the Prophet is *talking about* things yet to come. It isn’t all that difficult to see why Satan would want the passage understood that way. The Truth is, Ezekiel is listing the reasons why Satan will soon be cast out of Heaven and show up here on Earth as the Antichrist.

Ezekiel is referring to Heaven *parabolically* as “the mountain of God” in the following verse:

*“Therefore I have cast you as profane
From the mountain of God.”
(Ezekiel 28:16b)*

That is an admittedly enigmatic statement. Yet even when the Prophet speaks plainly about Satan being cast out of Heaven and down to Earth, Satan has managed to obscure what he said. To understand what Ezekiel said, one must know that he uses the term that we have been discussing when he says this:

***“I cast you to the ground;
I put you before kings,
That they may see you.”**
(Ezekiel 28:17b)*

The Prophet is referring to the “Earth,” not the “ground.” He is, like Isaiah, telling us what the

appearance of the Antichrist will be LIKE. That is, he is speaking *parabolically*, using the king of Tyre—just as Isaiah used the king of Babylon—as a *parabolic image* to tell us why Satan will be cast out of Heaven. If you don't know that, you miss the point of what he says. He is describing the same events as John does in this passage:

And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has {only} a short time."
(Revelation 12:7–12)

Not knowing that Isaiah and Ezekiel are pointing to the appearance of Satan as a man leaves a great big hole in one's understanding of those things. But that is not nearly as great a deficiency as not knowing the Prophet Zephaniah *meant* exactly what he *said* when he *talked about* the total destruction of this civilization that will be brought about by God's wrath and Satan's hatred of mankind:

"I will completely remove all {things} From the face of the earth," declares the LORD.
"I will remove man and beast;
I will remove the birds of the sky
And the fish of the sea,
And the ruins along with the wicked;
And I will cut off man from the face of the earth,"
declares the LORD.
"So I will stretch out My hand against Judah
And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
And I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place,

{And} the names of the idolatrous priests
along with the priests.
And those who bow down on the housetops
to the host of heaven,
And those who bow down {and} swear
to the LORD and {yet} swear by Milcom,
And those who have turned back from following the LORD,
And those who have not sought the LORD
or inquired of Him."
Be silent before the Lord GOD!
For the day of the LORD is near,
For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice,
He has consecrated His guests.
"Then it will come about on the day of the LORD's sacrifice,
That I will punish the princes, the king's sons,
And all who clothe themselves with foreign garments.
And I will punish on that day
all who leap on the {temple} threshold,
Who fill the house of their lord with violence and deceit.
And on that day," declares the LORD,
"There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate,
A wail from the Second Quarter,
And a loud crash from the hills.
Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar,
For all the people of Canaan will be silenced;
All who weigh out silver will be cut off.
And it will come about at that time
That I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
And I will punish the men
Who are stagnant in spirit,
Who say in their hearts,
'The LORD will not do good or evil!'
Moreover, their wealth will become plunder,
And their houses desolate;
Yes, they will build houses but not inhabit {them},
And plant vineyards but not drink their wine."
Near is the great day of the LORD,
Near and coming very quickly;
Listen, the day of the LORD!
In it the warrior cries out bitterly.
A day of wrath is that day,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
A day of trumpet and battle cry,
Against the fortified cities
And the high corner towers.

And I will bring distress on men,
 So that they will walk like the blind,
 Because they have sinned against the LORD;
 And their blood will be poured out like dust,
 And their flesh like dung.
 Neither their silver nor their gold
 Will be able to deliver them
On the day of the LORD's wrath;
And all the earth will be devoured
In the fire of His jealousy,
For He will make a complete end,
Indeed a terrifying one,
Of all the inhabitants of the earth.
 (Zephaniah 1:2-18)

Zephaniah is obviously talking about the whole Earth and not just a part of it. But Satan has convinced people the Prophet didn't mean what he said about the fiery destruction of the Earth. That will prove to be a huge mistake on their part. If the Day of the Lord was "near and coming very quickly" in Zephaniah's day, it is a whole lot closer today. And I would surmise its approach hasn't slowed down either. But dumb folks will go on doing what dumb folks have always done: They will believe what makes them feel comfortable. The Apostle Peter has this to say about their idiocy:

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with {their} mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For {ever} since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God {the} heavens existed long ago and {the} earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. **But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.**
 (2 Peter 3:3-7)

Stupid is as stupid does. And it is absolutely inane to mock something you know nothing at all about. Nevertheless, fools will always rush in ...

Editor: While we are on the subject of the, I have always wanted to ask you about "the Prophet" mentioned in John 1:21, 25; 6:14; and 7:40. Based on what we

are told in John 1:20-25, it is obvious that "the Prophet" the Jews were expecting was not John the Baptist, "the Christ," or Elijah. So who is "the Prophet"? Where does the Old Testament talk about this individual? Has he already come or is he yet to come?

Elijah: Before hastily admitting as true the things that you say are "obvious," let's look at the first of the three passages you mentioned. John says this:

And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" And he confessed, and did not deny, and he confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." They said then to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said." Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, {but} among you stands One whom you do not know. {It is} He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.
 (John 1:19-28)

I see nothing in that passage that tells me "it is obvious that 'the Prophet' the Jews were expecting was not John the Baptist, 'the Christ,' or Elijah." The only thing I see as obvious is the fact that the Jews had mistakenly assumed "the Christ," "the Prophet," and "Elijah" would be three separate people. So when they proceeded on that assumption and asked John the Baptist if he was one of those three, he didn't bother to correct their error in that regard, he merely answered their questions in the negative, told them who he was, and let them go on believing the same lie that you apparently also believe. That is, "the Prophet" the Jews were expecting must be someone other than the Messiah of Israel, Jesus Christ.

In the next passage that you mentioned, John tells us the people accurately recognized Jesus as "the Prophet" at one point in His ministry:

When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

(John 6:14–15)

That realization of the Truth concerning Who Jesus was dawned on some of those who witnessed Him feed a multitude with only five loaves of bread and two fish. The power they saw Him demonstrate in that *parabolic pantomime* was apparently more than they could handle, so they decided to take matters of state into their own hands. But as you can see, Jesus wanted no part of their grand scheme to make Him king. He knew God had already planned a completely different kind of coronation ceremony for Him.

The last passage you mentioned says this:

Now on the last day, the great {day} of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet {given,} because Jesus was not yet glorified. {Some} of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet." Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" So there arose a division in the multitude because of Him. And some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

(John 7:37–44)

Again, John does not tell us "the Prophet" and "the Christ" actually *were* two separate individuals. He only tells us that the Jews of that day *assumed* "the Prophet" and "the Christ" were two different people. That was what they had been taught, and they never stopped to consider that both "the Prophet" and "the Christ" might actually turn out to be the same Person. Unfortunately, mistaken assumptions can—and sometimes will—kill you.

"The Prophet" Who is supposed to come has already come, and the Jews did not recognize Him. That's not surprising; their "Christ" has already come and gone as well, and they not only rejected Him, they had Him crucified. So when I tell you that Christ is "the Prophet" the Jews were expecting, their ignorance in that regard should not come as any big surprise. By the time of Christ, the Pharisees had already scrambled most of the Truth of *The Teaching of Moses* far beyond easy recognition. Christians did exactly the same thing with *The Apostolic Teaching* later on.

This is the Old Testament passage where Moses talks about "the Prophet" the Jews were—and still are—expecting:

"When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you {to do} so. The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' And the LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require {it} of him.'"

(Deuteronomy 18:9–19)

In case you missed the point of what Moses said, let me explain it for you. He is telling the sons of Israel that they are not supposed to listen to the brainless pontification of all the various and sundry idiots who

come along claiming to have some supernatural understanding of the spiritual realm. They are, instead, to believe *The Teaching* concerning that realm that Moses *delivered* to them so that they could *hand it down* to the next generation with full knowledge that a Prophet—whom Moses said would be LIKE him—would one day come along teaching the same things that Moses taught. Moses tells them that when that Prophet appears, God will repudiate any and all in Israel who reject His *Teaching*.

This is a succinct summary of *why* Moses said *what* he said: The sons of Israel were supposed to be *handing down* *The Teaching* that he taught. Therefore, he told them God would eventually send “the Prophet” to check on the things they were teaching to see if they had done what they were supposed to do. That is *why* he introduces his comments concerning “the Prophet” with this statement:

“For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you {to do} so.”
(Deuteronomy 18:14)

Did you see the verb *listen* in that verse? That verb *means* exactly what it *says*. The sons of Israel were not supposed to *listen* to the false teaching of imbeciles, but they did. As a result, they did not understand the Truth of *The Teaching of Moses* when Jesus Christ, “the Prophet,” came along, speaking in parables and rudely correcting their ignorant beliefs. It’s too bad that most of them stupidly refused to listen to and understand what Christ said about their ridiculous beliefs and their ancestors’ failure to *hand down* *The Teaching of Moses*. If they had responded sensibly, their descendants might not today be “cut off from” Israel.

The most interesting thing that Moses says about “the Prophet” Jesus Christ is that He would be “like me.” Most people read that and ignorantly *assume* that Moses *meant* “the Prophet” would be “like” him only in the fact that he would also be a Prophet. Assumptions like that will definitely kill you. Moses knew “the Prophet” Jesus Christ would be *parabolically* LIKE him in several different ways, the most *significant* of which being that both men came to be the sole *heir of the promise* when all other members of “*The House*” of Israel were “cut off from” Israel.

Editor: In the main article of the last issue, you discussed Romans 1:28–6:4 in great detail. While you did a good job of explaining what Paul was talking about in this passage, you didn’t explain what he was talking about in Romans 2:15 when he said “the work of the Law” is, or can be, written on the hearts of Gentiles (unbelievers). You pointed out that there is a big difference between this reality and the reality that Believers experience having “the Law” written on their hearts. Would you, please, explain what Paul had in mind when he talked about “the work of the Law” being written on unbelievers’ hearts?

Elijah: I have no intention of explaining those things at this time. But I will tell you why I refuse to do so.

When God calls a person, He expects him to accomplish the *specific* task for which he was called. He does not expect him to do anything more or anything less than what he has been called to do. Therefore, God equips the individual for the *specific* task for which He called him and gives him whatever authority is necessary to accomplish that task. Having provided all that the individual needs to fulfill his calling, God does not expect him to overstep his authority by taking on a task that somebody else has been called to do or to neglect his own responsibility. Unfortunately, that is a lesson that many Evangelists today have failed to learn. If they had learned it, they would still be preaching the Gospel to sinners *outside* the Church, instead of usurping the role of the Teacher by teaching their ignorant beliefs instead of *The Teaching inside* the Church to those who claim to be Christians.

If the one whom God has called falls short of his calling by taking on someone else’s responsibility and/or neglecting his own, the swift and sure discipline of the Lord will follow hard on the heels of every infraction. It is then up to the individual as to whether or not he will respond to the discipline of the Lord and learn from it so as to fulfill his calling.

I realize the Truth I just explained concerning the calling of God and the discipline of the Lord will be impossible for Pretenders in the Church to accept. But that is only because they have not been called and therefore have no knowledge at all of how God deals with those to whom He has delegated authority. Unfortunately, I have had more than my share of experience in that regard. In the thirty-two years since God called me, I have gone contrary to the will of the Lord

countless times—much more frequently than I should have, or would have, had someone taught me about the discipline of the Lord early on. I can see now that each and every time I did something other than what God wanted, I suffered the consequences.

It has only been over the past ten years or so that I gradually came to realize that the Lord has been disciplining me all along. Only then was I able to go back and learn from all the times He had chastened and admonished me down through the years. I will readily admit that I will never be God's first pick as poster child for His obedient Children. Nevertheless, I have finally learned to recognize and heed His admonishment. In that, I feel extremely fortunate. Some folks never do.

I have told you about my calling and the discipline of the Lord only so that you can understand why I refuse to answer your question. I have learned the hard way that God is following a specific timetable in preparing His People for the End. While I have the *authority* to explain anything and everything I understand to anyone I care to, I am also well aware that some things that I understand are not to be explained openly at this time. They must be put off until later. That is why I require participants in The Next Step program to sign a confidentiality agreement. That puts them on notice that they are not to discuss the things I explain in that program with others until I have published them in a form that is available to everyone.

How the "work of the Law" has been written on the "hearts" of the Gentiles—that is, on the "hearts" of unbelievers—is one of the things that I cannot explain at this time because it would make little, if any, sense to the average person, and fools would ignorantly make it a bone of contention. Those who participate in The Next Step program will soon have a sufficient understanding of the Truth to enable them to comprehend how "the work of the Law" that is written on the heart of the unbeliever differs from "the Law" that is written on the heart of the Believer. So perhaps I will explain it to them. Everyone else will have to wait for an explanation of those things until we get nearer the End.

Editor: It has been a while since you last gave our readers an update on how things are progressing with the many books you plan to write. I know most of our subscribers are anxious for The Inheritance of the Believer—the second book in The Resurrection Theology

Series—to be published. Any idea when this book might be forthcoming? Also, do you still have plans to publish your personal testimony, God Called; I Answered? If so, how soon? And finally, are you any closer to producing a perfect-bound edition of the first volume of The Mystery of Scripture?

Elijah: About all that I can tell you concerning that is, my health has finally improved to the point where it is not continually holding me back. I have consistently had more good days than bad days in recent months; therefore, I am making more rapid progress on all fronts than I was at this time last year. However, the closer each of the books you mentioned gets to being ready for publication, the more work there is that needs to be done to get it into final form. Since I don't want to have to go back and correct something later, I have been hesitant to release anything in final form until I understand how everything in it fits together with other things that I understand. That accounts for some of the delay in publishing *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*. However, most of the difficulty we have encountered in trying to complete the various projects goes back to what I just explained about God's timing. I have been forced to admit that the time has not yet come for all of the information to be published.

Nearly twenty years ago, I set out trying to use a personal computer to track down the *parabolic images* and their associated Hebrew idioms in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. I spent thousands of dollars upgrading computers as computer hardware and software gradually advanced to the point where I was finally able to do what I set out to do *before* God's time. Seventeen years ago, I did the same thing in regard to video and computers. That technology has also finally matured to the point where I can now do what God called me to do with it. But that has happened only over the last year or so. I am currently waiting for the internet to mature to the point where I can broadcast streaming video over that medium. It is currently able to carry twelve or so frames per second. I need thirty.

It will be a while before all the information I have promised is finally published. Those folks who believe they are hearing the Truth will still be listening when everything is completed. Those who don't, won't. But it doesn't matter to me one way or the other whether *anyone* is listening because I am only doing what God called me to do. ■